

USDAnews

USDA's Employee News Publication—For You & About You!

Secretary Veneman Encourages Employees As They Tackle New Farm Law

by Patricia Klintberg, Office of Communications

Secretary **Ann M. Veneman** gave a stirring pep talk to employees charged with implementing the new farm law at USDA headquarters on May 15, just two days after the bill became law.

In remarks broadcast via satellite to Farm Service Agency offices throughout the country, Veneman acknowledged both the contribution employees made during farm bill development and the long hours still to come.

"Now the hard work begins, and that is implementing this new farm bill. It is an enormous challenge, but I am confident, from talking to so many of you over the past few months, that we are up to it," she said.

The new law will touch every mission area in the department.

"Career employees play such

an integral role in the process and have the institutional knowledge that is so important to implementation of all of these programs," Veneman said.

Veneman, whose comments were web-streamed live on the USDA website, drawing more than 580 viewers during the 23-minute talk, also announced the formation of a Farm Bill Working Group consisting of key career staff including budget director **Steve Dewhurst** and chief economist **Keith Collins** as well as the entire sub-cabinet.

A day earlier, Veneman announced the creation of a farm bill gateway on the USDA website. Look for the 2002 farm bill logo. The site is chock full of information provided by employees for farmers and ranchers seeking answers to questions about the new law.

As Veneman said, "You've delivered in the past, and you are the experts, the career force that continues to raise the bar and achieve great things. You are truly appreciated." ■

At USDA, We're Mentoring "Leaders Of Tomorrow"

"No Deposit, No Return"

by Ron Hall, Office of Communications

Baseball season is fully underway. So it's appropriate to say that USDA employees have been 'step-

ping up to the plate,' responding to the call from Secretary **Ann M. Veneman** to participate in an initiative she is promoting called "Leaders of Tomorrow."

In this initiative she is encouraging USDA employees and other adults to mentor students, including 4-H youth and those enrolled in FFA (formerly known as the Future Farmers of America). The

continued on pg. 3...



With the skyline of New York City in the distant background, **Rich Chipman** (right), director of the APHIS Wildlife Services State Office in Castleton, N.Y., steadies a pole as he helps **Tom Seamans**, an APHIS Wildlife Services biologist with the agency's National Wildlife Research Center Field Station in Sandusky, Ohio, establish a perimeter of mylar flagging around the Staten Island landfill. That landfill has been the destination for more than one million tons of wreckage from the World Trade Center, in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attack there. The shiny color of the mylar—along with the noise it makes in the wind—is effective in dispersing gulls from the area. It's one of the many initiatives that APHIS specialists have continued to employ at that site, since last September, to keep birds from harassing recovery workers and threatening efforts to preserve critical evidence possibly deposited there. Note **Hallie Pickhardt's** story below.—**PHOTO BY RICHARD DOLBEER**

USDA Protects Landfill Site From Gull Intrusion Yet Another Way We're Involved, Following Sept. 11

by Hallie Pickhardt, APHIS Public Affairs Staff

In the days following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, search and rescue crews and recovery specialists from around the nation were called to New York City to help comb through what remained of the United States' tallest buildings. As teams of workers began descending on Ground Zero and the Staten Island landfill—the

destination for more than 1 million tons of twisted metal and crumpled cars—they were joined by thousands of migrating gulls.

More than 3,500 Herring, Ring-billed and Great black-backed gulls making their way south along the Hudson River began harassing recovery workers and threatening efforts to preserve critical evidence at the Staten Island landfill. But on September 17, just six days after the terrorist attacks, Wildlife Services biologists with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service arrived at the scene to help—and they haven't left since.

"Gulls are a common site at landfills," said **Rich Chipman**,

continued on pg. 2...



Ann M. Veneman

Secretary of Agriculture

As America's farmers return to the fields to plant this spring, employees of the Farm Service Agency are busy updating crop bases and crop yields as required by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002.

FSA has the biggest task in implementing the new farm law but the Natural Resources Conservation Service also has a tremendous responsibility. The new law is very broad and contains many new programs to assist America's farmers and ranchers. To help them find out what they need to know about the new law, we have created a website—Farm Bill 2002—that will serve as a repository of information as we begin vigorously implementing its provisions. Look for the logo on www.usda.gov.

I have said this before but it is worth repeating. I am so impressed with the spirit in which our employees have tackled this new responsibility, coming as it does well into the current crop year. It required long hours of preparation and now, once the details are known, it will require even more time to make sure our producers have all the information they need to make an informed decision about participation.

Despite these additional pressures, I have been delighted to learn about the great amount of volunteer work that goes on among the

agencies regardless of other demands.

In particular I want to recognize the efforts of the FSA office in Kansas City, Mo., and the fine work they've done reaching out and improving the lives of school children in the area.

President **George W. Bush** has challenged each of us to try to give back, to help our communities, and become mentors to help children. In response to that charge, I launched our "Leaders of Tomorrow"

initiative last fall. My goal is to help inspire young adults to be more involved, encourage public service and teach them more about agriculture, one of the most dynamic sectors of the economy.

To accomplish this, several 4-H and FFA students accompany me to events and meetings when I travel. I also will deliver a series of lectures at agricultural colleges and universities around the country. And this summer we will hang the Children's Gallery of Agriculture in the portico of the Jamie

Whitten Building, at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC, for the enjoyment of all employees and visitors.

The work of USDA employees touches almost every American. We all know work can be rewarding. But so is mentoring and it's fun, just ask your colleagues in the Kansas City office. If your office is involved in mentoring, please let us know what your agency is doing to help the "Leaders of Tomorrow." ■



USDA Protects Landfill Site...continued from pg. 1

director of APHIS's Wildlife Services State Office, based in Castleton, N.Y. "But this isn't just any landfill, it's sacred ground and it's also a crime scene. This is *not* a place for birds to be loafing about."

For about eight months now, rotating teams of APHIS biologists, from around the nation, have worked from sunup to sundown to keep gulls and other birds away from the landfill—where truckload after truckload of debris is brought for examination each day. Led by Chipman, the teams use harmless noisemakers and pyrotechnic devices that explode in the air like fireworks to scare birds from the area. Since the arrival of the APHIS biologists, the number of gulls in the area has dropped dramatically.

"In fact," Chipman quipped, "the detectives on-site joke that this is the only landfill in the world without any birds."

In order to be effective, APHIS's Wildlife Services specialists must have an ongoing presence at the landfill or the gulls will return to the site. The specialists do dispersal work at landfills throughout the United States to protect the health and safety of employees and prevent birds from taking refuse offsite. In addition to harassing nuisance birds, they are also monitoring rodent populations at the Staten Island landfill.

"This tragedy highlights the fact that wildlife can cause problems in any setting," said **Bill Clay**, APHIS's deputy administrator for wildlife services, who spent two days working at the landfill. "It doesn't matter whether you're out in the country or near a major city."

More than 60 of the agency's Wildlife Services specialists from field and research positions in 23 States have worked two-week shifts at the landfill, and many more have volunteered.

"After September 11, everyone in the country wanted to do something to help," said **Dan McMurtry**, a wildlife services specialist who left his APHIS post in Columbia, Mo., to spend two weeks harassing gulls at the landfill. "This was something more than money that I could give."

McMurtry and other Wildlife Services experts who work at the site must dress in protective Ty-vek suits and rubber boots, and tread carefully around twisted girders, crumpled desks, crushed cars, and other rubble from the twin towers. They also wear respirators to avoid inhaling asbestos

and the methane gas that bubbles up from old mountains of trash. They all take pains to stay out of the way of similarly dressed law enforcement officials and other volunteers who are sorting through the

debris looking for pieces of plane, jewelry, credit cards, and other items that might help to identify a victim or shed new light on the terrorist attacks.

In addition to noisemakers and pyrotechnics, the APHIS biologists use a number of innovative techniques to keep the birds at bay. Mylar tape, which flashes in the sunlight and makes a crinkly noise in the breeze, has been hung around the landfill as yet another deterrent to the birds. In the early morning hours before the sun comes up, the specialists point lasers to the sky, sending a red dot of light, across the horizon, that also scares the birds away.

The landfill, which closed in February 2001 but reopened to serve as a clearinghouse for wreckage from the World Trade Center, has historically been the winter home of more than 100,000 gulls.

"On cloudy days, we've dispersed as many as 15,000 birds headed straight for the landfill," said **Ken Preusser**, a Wildlife Services district supervisor for APHIS based in Castleton. "We have to re-educate the gulls on a regular basis that this is no longer the place for them to be."

To check the effectiveness of their work, the specialists take a bird count around the landfill twice a day. During a typical busy day, they move more than 1,000 birds from the landfill.

Recovery efforts at the landfill were originally expected to last through the summer, but workers are far ahead of schedule and expect to finish sifting through all 1.25 million tons of wreckage by the end of May.

"We'll be here," Preusser underscored, "as long as they need us." ■



Richard Dolbeer, a research biologist with the APHIS National Wildlife Research Center Field Station in Sandusky, Ohio, uses a non-lethal pyrotechnic pistol to disperse gulls from the Staten Island landfill, the destination for more than one million tons of wreckage from the World Trade Center—
PHOTO BY TOM SEAMANS

goal is to inspire young adults by encouraging community involvement, careers in public service, and learning more about agriculture.

As an example of a "Leaders of Tomorrow" project, Farm Service Agency employees at the USDA office complex in Kansas City, Mo., have been participating in that office's "Community Outreach Mentoring and Tutoring Program" since 1996. "Our program works by connecting students, ages 6 to 18, with USDA employees," explained **Lillian Keyes**, the community outreach program manager at that FSA office. "These employees serve as positive role models and assistants to the classroom teachers in whatever ways that are helpful and appropriate."

Jackie Blanks, assistant deputy director of the Risk Management Agency's Office in Kansas City, pointed out that when this school-based mentoring program began in 1996, five USDA volunteers participated. In contrast, thus far in 2002 the agency has 85 USDA mentors and tutors, who provide services to students at four schools in the Kansas City, Mo., School District.

Keyes said that schools are selected for partnerships in this program based upon the achievement level of their students. She added that recent studies of that school district's overall test scores—in those schools that are partnered with USDA—have shown significant improvements in the students' overall behavior and attitude toward learning, as well as the actual test scores themselves. "The presence of these USDA volunteers has made a positive impact on the students and the general community," Keyes underscored.

"My theory for the success of our initiative, with the upcoming generation of students, is 'No Deposit, No Return,'" advised **Waymon Ponds**, director of FSA's Kansas City Administrative Office.

Keyes said that from 1996-2001 the estimated number of area students who have benefitted from this program is more than 2,500. "I believe that we're the only USDA location in the nation to have an outreach mentoring program of this magnitude," she advised.

"Our USDA volunteers enhance the lives of young people and strengthen their ability to succeed academically and socially," she emphasized.

Ponds said that the mentor program was recently invited to work with the local Kansas City Cable Television Education Network. "We were asked to participate in a 'live' monthly talk show regarding the benefits of mentoring and community service," he pointed out. "Plus, we're being encouraged to allow videotaping of activities involving mentors and mentees in our program."

"This venture with cable TV would allow news of our program—showing the benefits of mentoring and our concern for children—to go into more than 250,000 homes in this area."

FSA's outreach program in Kansas City expanded to include the agency's St. Louis Area Office in September 2001. According to **Germaine Jones**, an FSA accountant and mentoring coordinator for that office, 15 USDA volunteers are currently involved "and other volunteers are lined up, waiting for school to resume next fall."

USDA employees in other locations around the country are participating in similar "Leaders of Tomorrow" initiatives. For example, many employees participate through the Department's "Adopt-A-School" program.

"That's an effort to encourage USDA employees to volunteer their time and assistance, during the school day, to students in elementary, middle, and/or high schools located in the general geographic area of USDA offices," explained **Blondena Turner**, executive assistant to the assistant inspector general for policy development and resources management in the Office of Inspector General.

"Part of it is an attempt to help teach students the fundamental skills necessary to live and work successfully in the world of today." The July-August 1999 issue of the **USDA News** carried a story about the



"Maybe our next modeling gig will be in Paris," quips RMA branch chief **Dave Bell** (far right), as he and FSA agricultural marketing specialist **Rachel Hight** (2nd from right) model USDA "mentors" knit shirts, while FSA computer specialist **Delores Channell** (far left), and FSA branch chief **Arthur Greene** model USDA "mentors" sweatshirts—awarded to those USDA employees in Kansas City, Mo., who have been participating in a "Leaders of Tomorrow" initiative.—**PHOTO BY GEORGE McCLOSKEY**

Department's Adopt-A-School program.

As another example, on April 25-26 the Risk Management Agency provided 10 national winners of the "FFA Risk Management Strategies Writing Contest" with a trip to Washington, DC. According to **Michelle Fuller**, an RMA risk management specialist, this fifth annual contest attracted 183 agricultural high school students who applied the principles of risk management to their own individual FFA-sponsored agricultural projects in essays of 1,000 words or less. The essays were reviewed by a panel of 10 judges, which included five USDA employees.

"The risk management writing contest, through FFA mentors and others, encourages community involvement, inspires tomorrow's agricultural leaders, and promotes risk management education to young people enrolled in agricultural education," she added. "As such, the contest kept with the spirit of a 'Leaders of Tomorrow' initiative."

Still another "Leaders of Tomorrow" activity is the various "Shadow Days" in which USDA employees around the country encourage high school students to, in effect, "shadow" them during the workday to gain a familiarity with the work environment in general and work at USDA in particular. A recent such "Shadow Day"—called "National Groundhog Job Shadow Day" because it occurs every year on/around Groundhog's Day in February—involved employees in the Office of the Chief Information Officer, the Office of Operations, and the Forest Service at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC.

"This was particularly unique," advised OCIO management analyst **Carolyn Young**, "because in the federal government—including USDA—we're facing a shortage of information technology employees." Ten area high school students, who had expressed an interest in pursuing a federal information technology career, spent a half-day paired with USDA hosts, who showed them the different roles of information technology professionals at the Department.

"By encouraging our employees to work with students," noted Food Safety and Inspection Service financial assistant **Sonya Bankins**, "we're helping to develop and shape the work force of the new millennium, we're ensuring diversity in it—and we may help those students consider careers at USDA once they finish school."

USDA has established a web site, for more information about this initiative, at www.usda.gov/leadersoftomorrow. The January-March 2002 issue of the **USDA News** carried a photo of a recent "Leaders of Tomorrow" mentoring activity. ■

Employees *make these things happen*

Natural Resources and Environment

'Conservation Where You Live'

The 32nd anniversary of Earth Day on April 22 saw USDA employees around the country involved in a number of initiatives designed to promote the environment and conservation. In Madison, Wis., employees from two USDA agencies teamed up in a unique way, at one location, to let homeowners know about a variety of resource-friendly ways to not only build but also landscape their homes.

Those techniques were on display at a research demonstration house in Madison, Wis., run by the Forest Service's Forest Products Laboratory. That's where employees from the Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service teamed up "to show environmentally minded homeowners some ways to practice resource conservation while, at the same time, create a more livable house and yard," explained **Karen Martinson**, FS program manager for the demonstration house.

The working theme of the event could be described as "Conserva-

tion Where You Live."

Gordie Blum, FS public affairs director at the Lab, noted that, from the permanent wood foundation to the composite shingles on the roof, the four-bedroom, two-story unoccupied home showcases moisture-resistant building practices, the latest in energy efficient appliances, and 'green building' technologies advocated by leading building science specialists with the Forest Service.

"For example," he pointed out, "the roof shingles are a locally produced composite shingle, made from recycled plastic milk jugs and sawdust, that uses waste products to produce a heavy, durable roof cover."

Mike Ritter, FS's assistant director of wood products research at the Lab, added that blown-in cellulose insulation made from recycled newspapers restricts excessive airflow within the cavities and provides the house with R-20 walls and an R-38 ceiling.

Sue Paulson, FS public affairs specialist at the Lab, said that other innovative technologies and

products being used in the home included low emission paints and stains, and carpeting made from recycled materials.

NRCS employees focused on the landscaping around the residence, as part of an agency initiative called the "Backyard Conservation" campaign. **Dave Burgdorf**, the NRCS

plant materials specialist based in East Lansing, Mich., with the NRCS National Plant Materials Program, explained that, as an example of their efforts, some of the shrubs and grasses they had planted around the Madison house were "xerophytic species." "That means," he said, "they're adapted to dry conditions."

Bob Snieckus, the NRCS national landscape architect at the agency's headquarters office in Washington, DC, noted that "We plan to create such gardens as a 'sensory garden,' to encourage



"A little dirt under the fingernails is good for the soul," concludes NRCS public affairs specialist **Renae Anderson** (right), as she and **Ken Keeley**, an architect with the American Society of Landscape Architects, plant native grasses in the yard of the Madison house.—**PHOTO BY BARB JANSEN**

visitors to touch the plants, and a fragrance garden, featuring aromatic plants."

"Through this 'Backyard Conservation' effort," affirmed **Barb Jansen**, an NRCS visual information specialist at the agency's Wisconsin State Office in Madison, "we bring, to the city, the conservation practices which are employed in rural America—which promote clean air and good water and which benefit people and wildlife as well."

"This demonstration project illustrates the innovative and environmentally friendly uses of agriculture and forestry projects," said Secretary **Ann M. Veneman**, who toured the Madison home on Earth Day. "Through projects like these, we can bring conservation techniques into the homes and backyards of America."

—**RICHARD LINDBERG**

Some Of Our Recent Initiatives

- *USDA Continues To Step Up Homeland Security Efforts* (USDA News Release No. 0176)
- *Public/Private Partnership Expands To Boost Promotion Of Healthy Eating To Reduce The Risk Of Disease* (No. 0167)
- *USDA Announces Additional Steps To Reduce Pathogens In Raw Ground Beef* (No. 0161)
- *Bush Administration Creates New Interagency Wildland Fire Leadership Council* (No. 0140)
- *USDA Emergency Loan Program More Accessible To Farmers* (No. 0124)

EDITOR'S NOTE: For more detail, go to USDA's News Releases, by clicking onto USDA's Web site at www.usda.gov/newsroom.html

Rural Development

We Rolled Up Our Sleeves

It's all part of its mission for USDA to provide financial assistance for economic development to rural residents around the country. But recently, in southeastern New Hampshire, a big dose of 'employee elbow grease' was part of the deal.

That's because nine employees from Rural Development offices in New Hampshire and Vermont volunteered their time and labor to

apply a protective stain to 336 feet of a ten-foot-high fence and a storage shed at the "Inn at Deerfield," a facility for individuals with Alzheimers Disease and dementia.

The Inn had received a \$1,654,500 Rural Development Community Facility loan to construct the 32-bed residential assisted living facility. According to **Gregg MacPherson**, a rural development specialist at the RD area

office in Concord, N.H., the loan covered the cost of the 9,400 square-foot building on 10.6 acres of land and all the amenities needed to create a homelike atmosphere for its patients.

"The facility was even able to obtain a used car. They removed the motor and encourage the patients to sit in it and go on imaginary trips," said **Carolyn Chute-Festervan**, a housing outreach

specialist at the RD field office in Epping, N.H.

"Because the Inn is licensed at the support residential care level," added **Linda Woodard**, an RD rural rental housing technician in Concord, "it is able to provide services in nursing, psychiatry, pharmacy, dentistry, and podiatry."

However, after the Inn at Deerfield was completed and all of the

...continued on pg. 5

Editor's Roundup *USDA's people in the news*



Suzanne Biermann was named deputy under secretary for food, nutrition, and consumer services.

Before joining USDA, from 1998 until her appointment to this position Biermann served as the deputy commissioner of planning, evaluation, and project management for the Texas Department of Human Services, headquartered in Austin. During her service in that position she was the executive sponsor of a software development project to replace the automation used by over 12,000 field workers in determining client eligibility for temporary cash assistance, food stamps and nutrition programs, health care coverage, and community-based programs for the elderly and people with disabilities.

From 1996-98 Biermann worked in Olympia, Wash., for the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services as the special assistant to the assistant secretary of the Economics Services Administration, where she supported the administration and regulatory development of the state's public assistance, welfare-to-work, and child support enforcement programs. From 1992-96 she worked as a grants policy specialist in the Office of the Assis-

tant Secretary for Management and Budget within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, DC, dealing with grants policy for over 300 mandatory and discretionary programs within HHS. She was a research associate from 1988-92 for James Bell Associates, a Washington, DC-based management consulting firm focusing on improving services and programs within state and federal government.

Biermann holds a B.S. degree in business administration from Radford University in Radford, Va.

Julie Paradis, the previous deputy under secretary for food, nutrition, and consumer services, held that position from December 1997 until January 2001, and is now the Washington counsel for America's Second Harvest, a nationwide network of 50,000 food pantries, soup kitchens, and food rescue organizations serving low income individuals across America. ■



David Tenny was named deputy under secretary for natural resources and environment,

responsible for policy relating to the programs of the Forest Service.

From January 2001 until his appointment to this position Tenny served as acting deputy under secretary for natural resources and environment. Before joining USDA, from

1997-2001 he worked for the Committee on Agriculture in the U.S. House of Representatives, where he served as counsel and policy advisor on natural resources and related issues. He was counsel for Rep. **Wally Herger** (R-Calif.) from 1995-97.

A native of Boise, Idaho, Tenny holds a B.A. degree in American studies from Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, and a law degree from George Washington University in Washington, DC.

Anne Keys, the previous deputy under secretary for natural resources and environment, held that position from August 1998 until January 2001 and is now the vice president for policy with the Washington, DC-based Environmental Working Group, which promotes farmland conservation programs. ■



Hunt Shipman was named deputy under secretary for farm and foreign agricultural

services, focusing on commodity and farm loan programs as well as crop insurance.

From January 2001 until his appointment to this position Shipman served as acting deputy under secretary for farm and foreign agricultural services. Before joining USDA he worked as a legislative assistant to Sen. **Thad Cochran** (R-Miss.) from 1997-2001, concentrating on

agricultural, environmental, and foreign policy issues as well as appropriations for USDA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Departments of Interior and State.

From 1995-97 Shipman served as a professional staff member on the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies, within the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations. As a legislative assistant to Cochran from 1992-95, he focused on issues associated with natural resources, environment, food and drug regulation, and forestry, as well as appropriations for the Departments of Interior and Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency. During 1992 he worked as a graduate assistant to the dean of agriculture and home economics at Mississippi State University in Starkville, Miss.

A native of Dyersburg, Tenn., Shipman holds a B.S. degree in agribusiness from Mississippi State University.

Tom Grau, the previous deputy under secretary for farm and foreign agricultural services, held that position from April 1999 until January 2001, and is now the administrator of the Business Development Division with the Des Moines-based Iowa Department of Economic Development, which coordinates all business development and international trade for the state of Iowa. ■

...continued from pg. 4

loan funds were spent, two items were still missing. "It still needed a shed to store both summer and winter lawn maintenance equipment, and there were 336 feet of wooden fence that needed to be stained," said **Joe Silveira**, an RD construction analyst in Concord.

So MacPherson, Silveira, and **Bill Richard**, owner of Pilot Construction in Portsmouth, N.H., took action. They obtained donated materials from several local compa-

nies in New Hampshire. Then **Jolinda LaClair**, RD State Director for New Hampshire and Vermont, based in Montpelier, Vt., along with eight RD staff members, the project architect, and employees of Pilot Construction, provided the labor to finish the job.

"Specifically," said **Susan Farber**, an RD rural development specialist in Concord, "employees of Pilot Construction built the storage shed. Then RD employees stained the shed and the fence that

surrounds the Inn."

"While making loans for health care facilities and other community projects is a common occurrence," LaClair said, "having staff volunteer their time, to make sure the project has all its needs met, is not."

"We stepped in," added **Karen Boudreau**, an RD community facility technician in Concord, "and helped give the residents of the Inn at Deerfield a home they can be proud of."

—CAROLYN LAWRENCE



"Isn't this what **Tom Sawyer** once did?" quips RD's **Linda Woodard** (standing), as she and RD's **Karen Boudreau** apply a protective stain to a ten-foot-high fence at the "Inn at Deerfield" in New Hampshire.—

PHOTO BY CAROLYN LAWRENCE



Mike Neruda was appointed deputy under secretary for rural develop-

ment, concentrating on operations and management.

From June 2001 until his appointment to this position Neruda served as the acting deputy under secretary for rural development. He was a confidential assistant to Secretary **Ann M. Veneman** from April to June 2001. From 1997-2001 he served as staff director of the Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities, Resource Conservation and Credit within the Committee on Agriculture in the U.S. House of Representatives. In this position he advised the House Agriculture Committee on issues related to farm commodities, trade, conservation, and credit.

Neruda managed the Risk Management Agency's network of regional service offices, coordinated a structural reorganization of Departmental Administration, and served as acting deputy assistant secretary for administration, from

1992-97. During 1992 he served as the executive assistant to [then] Secretary **Edward Madigan**. In that position he co-directed a comprehensive USDA field structure review, which resulted in a proposal for a nationwide restructuring of USDA client services.

From 1987-92 Neruda worked as a legislative director for [then] Rep. **Fred Grandy** (R-Iowa). He was the minority consultant to the Subcommittee on Wheat, Soybeans, and Feed Grains within the House Agriculture Committee from 1985-87. From 1982-85 he was a legislative assistant to [then] Sen. **Roger Jepsen** (R-Iowa), after having served as press secretary and special assistant to [then] Sen. **Ed Zorinsky** (D-Neb.) from 1979-82.

A Captain in the U.S. Navy Reserve, Neruda was called to active duty in 1991 during Operation Desert Storm, serving as a public affairs officer in the U.S. Central Command's Joint Information Bureaus in Dhahran and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. After the war ended he had direct responsibility to U.S. Army General **Norman Schwarzkopf**, commander of all U.S. forces during that war, during

which Neruda managed critical aspects of Schwarzkopf's participation in public events. Neruda then left active duty in late 1991 and returned to his staff position with the U.S. Congress.

Neruda was reared on a family farm, near Dorchester, Neb., which raised wheat, corn, milo, and cattle. He holds a B.S. degree in general agriculture from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and an M.A. degree in public administration from the University of Oklahoma.

Inga Smulkstys, the previous deputy under secretary for rural development, held that position from March 1996 until January 2001, and is now a Washington, DC-based part-time consultant in a number of areas. ■



John Surina was appointed deputy assistant secretary for administration.

From January 2001 until his appointment to this position in November 2001 Surina served as acting deputy assistant secretary for administration. From

1998-2001 he was the first director of USDA's newly established Office of Ethics. In that position he provided ethics training and counseling to high-level USDA personnel, administered financial disclosure requirements, and directed ethics policy throughout the Department.

Surina was staff director of the Federal Election Commission from 1983-98. In that capacity he was the statutory chief operating officer of that independent regulatory agency, which regulates the financing of federal election campaigns and provides technical assistance to state and local election officials. From 1973-82 he held various positions with the [then] Interstate Commerce Commission. This included serving from 1980-82 as its assistant managing director during the implementation of the reform legislation that largely deregulated the trucking, railroad, and passenger bus industries.

Surina worked as a consultant to the [then] Cost of Living Council, under the Executive Office of the President, from 1972-73, where he aided in the development and administration of a computerized tracking system for pay increase

PROFILE PLUS *More About: Bobby Acord*



Bobby Acord is a 29-year veteran of the agency Secretary **Ann M. Veneman** tapped him to run on November 7, 2001—the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (the Jan.-March 2002 issue of the **USDA News** carried his complete biographical sketch, following his selection to that position). A native of West Virginia, as administrator of APHIS Acord understands

the grave challenges that face his agency and its employees each day.

"This agency is like a corporate conglomerate. We have so many different activities that require such detailed knowledge to make decisions. And the decisions we do make can have such a tremendous impact on agriculture, trade, and farmers," Acord said.

APHIS has over 7,700 employees and a budget of more than \$1 billion. It is charged with working overseas and at U.S. borders to prevent the entry of foreign pests and diseases. APHIS also conducts ongoing programs to monitor U.S. agricultural health and eradicate pest or disease outbreaks when they occur. These efforts not only maximize domestic agricultural production but also facilitate U.S. agricultural exports. The agency also controls wildlife damage to livestock, crops, and natural resources; oversees humane care and treatment of animals; and helps ensure the safety of genetically engineered plants.

Acord believes the way to keep the agency operating at its optimum pace is to be as inclusive as possible with constituents and the states. "I want us to focus on making our programs work together," he said. "We now have a monthly conference call with the State Departments of Agriculture. We talk

about animal and plant health issues and answer questions. We had never done this before. But I believe the more people involved in success the better."

He credits the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in Great Britain last year with preparing the agency for the aftermath of September 11.

"We were on high alert and had been since the beginning of February 2001," he said. "What became a challenge was protecting our employees, our facilities, and security. These were things we had thought about, but now we think about them from a terrorist's perspective."

Despite or perhaps because of these responsibilities Acord does worry about losing sight of what is important at the ground level—"reconnecting with the dirt," as he puts it. "Everyone in the USDA headquarters needs to get out on a farm a couple of times a year," he said. "We need to get reacquainted with the importance of what we are protecting."

Last Book Read: "*Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News*" by **Bernard Goldberg**

Hobbies: Being outdoors, hiking

Favorite Food: Steak!

Last Movie Seen: "*October Sky*," about a West Virginia lad who starts out in the coal mines ("Terrific, a story about success and perseverance")

Favorite Weekend Breakfast: Eggs, hash browns, biscuits, and a little ham

Priorities in the Months Ahead: Strategic planning ("My view is what happens today, what happens tomorrow is the result of planning strategies that you put in place, six months, a year—two years ago. You don't wait until the arsonist shows up to start planning a firehouse")

—PATRICIA KLINTBERG

adjudications. From 1970-72 he was based in Falls Church, Va., as a systems analyst in the Systems Division of Computer Sciences Corporation. He served from 1966-70 as a U.S. Army Intelligence Officer at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Civil Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.

A native of Alexandria, Va., Surina holds a B.S. degree in international affairs from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Washington, DC.

Debbie Matz, the previous deputy assistant secretary for administration, held that position from December 1997 until January 2001, and is now a member of the board of directors of the National Credit Union Administration, a federal agency that charters, supervises, and insures the nation's federal credit unions. ■



Wanda Worsham was named deputy assistant secretary for congressional relations.

Before rejoining USDA, from January 1995 until her appointment to this position Worsham served as chief clerk for the Committee on Agriculture in the U.S. House of Representatives. She was minority staff consultant for the House Committee on Agriculture from 1993-94. From 1982-92 she served as a legislative officer for USDA, covering such areas as food safety, biotechnology, commodity marketing and promotion, animal and plant health, food assistance programs, and agricultural research.

Worsham began her government career in 1971 as assistant clerk for the House Committee on the District of Columbia, where she worked for four years before serving from 1975-82 as administrative assistant to the minority counsel for the House Committee on Agriculture.

A native of Old Hickory, Tenn., Worsham holds a B.S. degree in business education from Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tenn.

Cheryl Macias, the previous deputy assistant secretary for con-

gressional relations, held that position from 1996-98 and is now the chief operating officer of the Farm Credit Administration in McLean, Va. ■



Jim Little was appointed administrator of the Farm Service Agency.

From January 2001 until his appointment to this position Little served as the acting administrator for FSA. He was the associate chief financial officer for financial operations in USDA's Office of the Chief Financial Officer during 2000. In that position he provided oversight to USDA's overall financial operations, with an emphasis on ensuring that USDA's mission agencies complied with U.S. government accounting standards and regulations, involving assets valued at nearly \$120 billion.

Little's 31 years of experience with USDA also includes serving as acting budget director for the [then] Federal Crop Insurance Corporation in the early 1980s, deputy director of the Budget Division in the [then] Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service from 1984-88, deputy director and then director of the Financial Management Division in ASCS from 1988-96, and service with the Commodity Credit Corporation, first as treasurer from 1988-96 and then as controller from 1996-2000. He began his career with USDA as a staff accountant in the [then] Rural Electrification Administration in Washington, DC, in 1971.

A native of Charlotte, N.C., Little holds a B.S. degree in business administration from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute in Blacksburg, Va.

Keith Kelly, the previous administrator of FSA, held that position from May 1997 until January 2001 and is now an agricultural consultant in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. ■



USDA's 105,000-plus employees include at least a handful of runners who have participated in marathons across the country. But that number grows ever smaller when it

narrows to those who have participated in marathons overseas.

Sonia Jacobsen makes that elite cut, however—and has a tale to tell about how she learned, firsthand, of the differences in marathons held on different continents.

Jacobsen, a hydraulic engineer with the Natural Resources Conservation Service's State Office in St. Paul, Minn., recently journeyed to Ireland to run in the Dublin City Marathon.

Cutting to the chase—literally—Jacobsen finished with a time of three hours and 52 minutes. "I was the first Minnesotan, twelfth in my age category, and no doubt the first and only USDA employee to cross the finish line," she quipped.

But her tale of that 26.2 mile journey, throughout Dublin, includes these observations.

"Running an international marathon," Jacobsen noted, "introduced me to cobblestone streets and sports drinks—one of which tasted like a combination of orange Gatorade and orange Tang—that aren't known in the U.S." Aid stations were every three to four miles—unlike marathons in America that tend to have aid stations every one to two miles.

"In the U.S.," she said, "water and sports drinks are provided in paper cups. But in the Dublin marathon, at each aid station runners could grab a bottle of water or a pouch of a sports drink, and both forms of beverage had screw-on caps to seal them."

That ended up proving significant. Many runners would typically grab a bottle or pouch, drink only some of the beverage, then seal the container and toss it to the curb. "I later learned," Jacobsen said, "that, by the six-hour mark in the race, while I was recovering back at my hotel, runners still participating encountered aid stations that had closed, since they had run out of water."

"So," she related, "my teammates and others picked up, off the ground, some of those partially filled but discarded beverage containers and then used those as a substitute measure—as their only source of refreshment."

But by the seven-hour mark in the race, the situation had become critical. "So some of the race coaches, realizing the potential health problem for runners who still hadn't finished,

hurriedly convinced local businesses to lend them a table, set it up between mile 21 and 22, bought as much water and sports drinks as they could from local merchants, and then provided the liquids to every runner still on the course."

"At the end of the marathon all participants were handed a cardboard box with a plaque inside," she said. "That's not how it's normally done at a U.S. marathon, where finishers normally have a medal placed around the neck—so that just added to the uniqueness of this experience." ■

The **USDA News** is published by the Office of Communications, the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This employee news publication, which is prepared by, for, and about this Department's employees, is distributed to USDA's 105,600 federal employees—full-time, part-time, and temporary—by order of the Secretary of Agriculture. Mailing address is Rm. 430-A Whitten Bldg.; OC, USDA; 1400 Independence Ave., SW; Washington, D.C. 20250-1350.

To update your mailing address or change the quantity of **USDA News** copies received in your USDA office, please contact your agency's mailing/distribution specialist.

Ron Hall	Editor
Arabella Juarez	Art Director
Cedric Drake	Printing and Distribution Coordinator
Charles Hobbs	USDA News Internet Coordinator
Gayle Turner	USDA News Internet Assistant

The **USDA News** is also available on USDA's Home Page within the Internet. Use the World Wide Web to access that Home Page version. Simply type the Home Page address—or Universal Resource Locator (URL)—of the **USDA News**, which is

<http://www.usda.gov/news/pubs/newslett/cover.htm>

In addition, USDA employees may access the Department's Intranet for information that is internal to USDA and for its employees only. Employees will need to use a USDA computer, plus a USDA server that permits Intranet access. The Intranet's URL is

<http://www.hqnet.usda.gov/intranet/intranet.htm>

USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

The **USDA News** is printed on paper containing a minimum of 50 percent waste paper. The **USDA News** is recyclable.



Sergio Perez (left), an NRCS plant technician with the agency's Plant Materials Center in East Lansing, Mich, and FS research facilities engineering technician **Cindy Hanson** are getting ready to plant an Indigo silky dogwood shrub. The plant is part of a landscaping plan developed for the yard of a research demonstration house in Madison, Wis., run by the Forest Service's Forest Products Laboratory. Employees from FS and NRCS teamed up at that site to show environmentally minded homeowners some ways to practice resource conservation while, at the same time, create a more livable house and yard. They most recently promoted their innovations on Earth Day, April 22. Note **Richard Lindeborg's** story on page 4.— **PHOTO BY RENAE ANDERSON**



Help Us Find **Mila Dopham**

Missing: **12-25-1999** From: **Stanton, CA**
D.O.B. **12-2-1991** Sex: **Female**
Hair: **Black** Eyes: **Brown**
Height: **3 ft.** Weight: **42 lbs.**

If you have information, please call
1-800-843-5678

NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

USDA-Sponsored Calendar Highlights

■ Month of May

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month
USDA headquarters and field offices
(202) 720-7314 or (202) 720-6382 (TTY)

■ June 20-21

*2002 National Ag in the Classroom
Conference*
Washington, DC
(202) 720-7925 or 1-800-877-8339 (TTY)

■ July 8

USDA Honor Awards Ceremony
Washington, DC
(703) 690-0266 or (202) 720-6382 (TTY)

U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250



OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300